

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT)

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ABSTRACT

Technological progression and modernization are occurring rampantly worldwide which has indeed made life easy for human beings. Digitalization and computerization are the repercussions of globalization which has brought access to every nook and corner of the society. And today's classrooms stand testimony to this fact. The domination of Information and telecommunication which exists in several other fields has slowly but steadily intruded the field of education also. This paper analyzes the various tools of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) which find their usage in English language teaching (ELT), its importance and implications.

KEYWORDS: *Technology, Computerization Classrooms, Information Communication Technology (ICT), English Language Teaching (ELT)*

INTRODUCTION

The field of information technology (IT) has developed enormously and its advancements have expanded exponentially in the past few decades. IT revolves mainly around telecommunication of information or data in numerical, pictorial or textual format. This has also led to the emergence of a new field called information and communication technology (ICT). ICT uses processed information that is designed to meet human needs. It is also greatly being used in education as a step to ensure a better understanding of concepts and introduction of an array of activities during class hours to make the session interesting and entertaining. ICT in education involves the processing and presentation of the study matter in a manner that supports better learning. It represents latest multimedia tools, including computer software, CD-ROMs, the internet, mobile phone, television, film as well as internet-based Project work, e-mail, chat, blogs, wikis, podcasts etc. (Hismanoglu, 2011).

One of the major areas that go hand in glove with IT and ICT is English communication and these advancements have definitely left no stone unturned. This can be observed through the inclusion of ICT in English Language Teaching (ELT). According to a study conducted by Ahmad (2012) integrating media technology in ELT classrooms helps greatly in acquiring and improving four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. ICT has come to be regarded as an increasingly important part of English Language Teaching and seems that it will become a normal part of ELT practice in the coming years (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007). Thus modern methods of ELT have replaced the conventional methods of teaching English such as the chalk and board. Introduction of multimedia into teaching has revolutionized learning by providing a new platform for the

learners to exchange their views, thoughts and ideas with the global community.

Tools of ICT in ELT

Some of the Important ICT Tools and Applications used in the Field of English Language Teaching are the Following:-

Computers

These miracle machines have gained the status of 'most important' tool of information and communication technology and are also regarded as the backbone of modern human life. Almost all modern communication requirements cannot be met without the use of computers. It performs a variety of functions such as collecting, organizing, analyzing, preparing and interpretation of data for communication. It is helpful in enhancing one's English language speaking and listening skills.

Audio CDs and CD ROM

These tools of ICT are widely being used for listening comprehensions and pronunciation enhancement exercises. They contain several multimedia files such as audio and video files that provide a certain degree of interactivity with the learner. They are also very good at providing training in grammar. Test materials are also incorporated in some versions which help the learner to undergo a self-assessment and analysis of his/her abilities. However it is not very effective for improving one's speaking skills as very few 'listen and repeat' versions are available in the market today.

DVD

Audiovisual content in the Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) format is largely replacing the video cassettes which are now outdated and rarely used. A DVD is similar to audio disc and differs only in its flexibility. While using a DVD, the learner is provided with the freedom of choosing from an array of options and extra featured such as watching a film or documentary with or without subtitles, quality of the soundtrack and the quality of the visual content such as High Definition (HD) etc. Therefore, it provides greater flexibility and adaptability to the learner. And because of its easy availability and access in present times, this tool of ICTs gaining popularity among English teachers and learners.

Internet

The most important facets of telecommunication is the Internet. All modern age communication takes place through the internet through different mediums. The internet has the world appear small, thanks to its speed, convenience and economic nature. Apart from communication, there are numerous facilities available for communication on the internet which also helps to enhance one's knowledge of English. The introduction of learners and teachers to World Wide Web has exposed them to a whole new learning community and has acted as a platform for learning new and complex concepts (Lankshear *et al.*, 2000). It has also exposed them to global standards. Some of the other features of the internet are the following:-

Social Media

Social media is a beneficial platform for communicating, sharing thoughts, ideas etc. it has introduced us to newer and less traversed fields such as blogging and micro-blogging. Blogs are made on it. Students can add themselves to the English language learning groups or subscribe to YouTube channels associated with English teaching and take advantage of the information shared. Social networking sites like, Facebook and Twitter are very helpful in enhancing language skills.

Online Study Materials

Online materials and services are available in the form of e-tutoring, e-learning, e-journals, e-magazines, e-books, e-library, online training, virtual classes etc. for the benefit of the learners. One of the major reasons for these forums to be a hit among the present generation is that it is free of time constraints. Learners can access these contents in their own flexible timings and gain from it.

Online Courses

Several online courses covering a wide spectrum of subjects are available on the internet. Enrolling themselves in these courses enables students to and get educated and trained from the comfort of their own place. The course contents are available online in the form of videos which the learner can download and have a look whenever he/ she find time at their own convenience. The enrolled candidate is expected to appear for a final exam along with submission of assignments that are incorporated with the study material itself. Enrolling in courses pertaining to English language learning can bring about its enhancement. Some of the agencies which provide online courses are MOOC, NPTEL, IIT's, Concordia University etc. E-tutoring through Skype is also becoming a popular option. Learners are taught through Skype by trainers

Feature Films

Films can also be employed as a tool for teaching the English language. The Embassies of English speaking countries incorporate such activities on a weekly basis to help improve English language communication of the aspirants who wish to travel abroad for various reasons such as higher education, employment, permanent residentship etc. It is also used to create social circles and groups which can help form new friends and increase interaction with members from different countries and culture thereby providing greater exposure and ideas. The films screened are mainly documentaries, educational and entertainment related. It results in a satisfying learning experience.

Mobile Phones

Life has become indispensable without mobile phones for the man of the modern world. There is no unachievable task with mobile phone handy. Apart from telecommunication, mobile phones are also used for study purposes. Changing the operating language from the vernacular language to English proves to be useful in developing language skills. Several applications are available in Google Play Store for Android versions and also iOS versions that help one improve communication skills. There are specific applications that help to enhance grammar, speaking skills, pronunciation, phonetic aspects, vocabulary etc. Installation of such applications with regular and meticulous practice will prove to be effective in the long run.

Translation Apps

When a student does not know the meaning of a word, or how to express themselves on a particular subject, the act of looking it up can be very helpful. Not only do they get to carry on a conversation in the here and now, but it may also stick with them in the long run. Having to physically look something up is a great way to get it into your mind. It's less bulky than carrying around a dictionary, too, and some apps respond to speech as well as to typed words.

Podcasts

Cell phones could be used in the classroom to the podcast. Several online tools like Gabcast (www.gabcast.com) are easy to use. The recorded audio file can be embedded on blogs and websites, or downloaded as an mp3 file. Its reasonable cost gives an educator an option to demonstrate the impact of learning the language in the classroom using a mobile phone.

SMS (Short Message Service)

SMS system can be used to help students learn foreign languages and teachers can use SMS to communicate with one student or a group. The BBC Company once launched one program to help to learn English via SMS in that the users in the world's largest single mobile telephone market will receive a daily text message on their mobile containing an English phrase. (British Broadcasting Company [BBC], 2003, n. p.). Cell phones could be used to help students with vocabulary and grammar through SMS text exchanges with the teacher, peers, or foreign language students. Many studies have been conducted and they confirm the positive impact on language learning and on motivation (Hairy (2015), Cavus and Ibrahim (2009) & Thornton and Houser (2005)).

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a mobile chat application that allows the user to chat with people whom they are familiar with and also make new connections. One can have one-on-one text conversations, participate in group chats and make calls through the mobile app. Chatting on WhatsApp is similar to an English practice session along with a comfortable peer group such as friends or family. Group chats help to communicate with people from across the globe who are also learning English. Text chats on WhatsApp help the user by providing ample time to think about their responses and organize their thoughts. Using the autocorrect feature on the phone is an excellent method to learn proper spelling while text chatting. WhatsApp also has a free video calling feature, which enables the user to practice speaking and listening in English, too (Hamad, 2017).

Overhead Projectors

It is an important tool used for teaching purposes. The main purpose of an OHP is for displaying information which is printed particularly in a transparent plastic sheet to a large number of people simultaneously. Though one cannot consider it a technological teaching tool wholly, to some extent it is helpful in English language teaching also. Concepts of grammar can be explained in a coherent manner to ensure proper understanding of the learners (Abhishek, 2017).

Television

It serves the dual purpose of education as well as entertainment for the people. It is found to be helpful in developing listening and speaking skills. One of the easiest methods to learn a regional language is to watch serials and movies in that particular language. In recent times, several channels related to education, particularly language improvement are being relayed as a measure to cater to learners worldwide. A large number of students may be benefitted

with such programs. English learners are often advised to watch English channels such as BBC to help improve their language. Learners can observe the pronunciation, voice modulation, intonation and pace of speech and several aspects of non-verbal communication such as body language, posture, kinesics, oculesics etc and benefit from it. It also helps in vocabulary building. Listening and speaking skills are developed automatically during such exercise.

Radio

Radio has proven to be a very helpful strategy in the education of students belonging to rural areas. Though considered out-dated and out fashioned, it is a tested and proven method. Distance education and open education programs are being conducted through radio which has touched the lives of many. Several channels related to the development of language skills are being hosted. The programs relayed on these channels include dialogues, dramas, discussion forums, question and answer sessions, telephonic conversations etc that help build language skills.

CONCLUSIONS

In the past few decades, the enormous development in the domain of ICT has resulted in its infiltration in almost all aspects of modern human lives. Especially for English language learning, the boom of ICT and its efficient integration into English learning and teaching has definitely been a blessing in disguise to both learners and teachers. One of the biggest reasons for its success has been attributed to the individual attention and customized learning experience that it offers to the learner. Implementation of ICT into English language learning has succeeded in meeting the demands, needs and expectations of the learners in today's incessantly evolving society. However, it is further completely dependent on the process of the teaching staffs of English being updated which would facilitate them to handle user-friendly technology for teaching without uncertainty and at ease.

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